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Moscow and the Reagan Administration: Initial Assessments and Responses

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Memorandum

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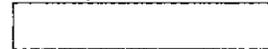


Moscow and the Reagan Administration: Initial Assessments and Responses

National Intelligence Council
Memorandum

*Information available as of 1 September 1981
has been used in the preparation of this Memorandum.*

This Memorandum was prepared under the auspices of the Acting National Intelligence Officer for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in response to a request from the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. It was written by [redacted] of the Strategic Evaluation Division, Office of Strategic Research, and coordinated within the National Intelligence Council. Comments may be addressed to the NIO/USSR-EE on [redacted]



**Moscow and the
Reagan Administration:
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Summary

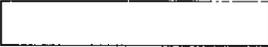
The Soviets view their relationship with Washington as fundamentally competitive, and they believe the Reagan administration is moving to increase the costs and risks of that competition to Moscow. A more deep-seated Soviet concern, however, is that the advent of the Reagan administration represents the intensification of a secular trend in US policy, less tolerant of Soviet expansionism and intent on the reassertion of a more vigorous American role as the political and military guarantor of Western security.

Soviet responses to the Reagan administration's initial policy postures have consequently sought to tread a careful path between not provoking what Moscow sees as an aroused adversary, while countering what Moscow also sees as US attempts to exploit Soviet vulnerabilities in Afghanistan, Poland, and the Soviet economy, as well as the overextension of Soviet resources in various regions of the globe.

The Reagan administration's stated commitment to accelerate the US defense effort is of greatest concern to the Soviets, and the extent to which US programs are actually implemented is probably the most important factor for Moscow in determining its longer term responses. There have been private Soviet suggestions that Moscow already is adjusting its defense effort upward in response to the prospective US military effort. Such an adjustment, if it occurs, would probably be in areas such as research and development, that would be difficult for us to confirm. Nevertheless, increasingly acrimonious public statements by senior Soviet military officers contending that the USSR will match any US military buildup suggest that Moscow is becoming more anxious about the near-term decisions that it feels constrained to make to counter US programs.

The Soviets are probably confident of their ability to compete with an accelerated US defense effort over the short term because of the advanced stage of Soviet research and development programs and the fact that many of the US programs under consideration will not be deployed until the mid-to-late 1980s. While professing a belief that the United States cannot sustain such a competition over the long run, the Soviets probably anticipate that even a partial fulfillment of the Reagan administration's defense plans would create serious problems for Soviet defense planning.

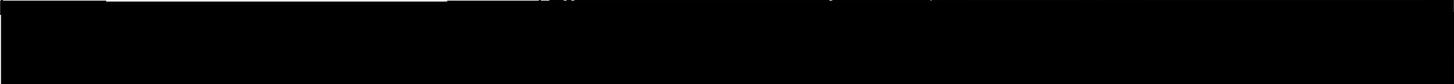




Moreover, the Soviets probably are even more concerned about the US potential for some sort of technological breakthrough, as witnessed by Moscow's commentary on "stealth" technology, the resurgence of US interest in antiballistic-missile defense, and the operational testing of the Space Shuttle. 

Western Europe is viewed by Moscow as the axis of US-Soviet regional interaction during the Reagan administration, with NATO's planned modernization of theater nuclear forces (TNF) being the cynosure of contention. In their effort to forestall NATO's TNF effort and to discredit US policies in Europe, the Soviets have engaged in a vigorous diplomatic and propaganda campaign as well as an extensive covert-action campaign aimed at manipulating public opinion in those countries—such as the Netherlands and Belgium—that are seen as most vulnerable to domestic pressures to break ranks with NATO's TNF decision. In their effort to discredit US policies in the eyes of West Europeans, the Soviets are encouraged further by what they see as growing antinuclear and neutralist sentiments throughout Western Europe. 

Elsewhere, the Soviets have sought to demonstrate an intention of sustaining commitments in areas central to Soviet security concerns, although they have refrained from unnecessarily exacerbating regional tensions with Washington—most notably demonstrated by Moscow's reluctance to engage in a confrontation with Washington over El Salvador. Privately, the Soviets continue to express frustration over their inability to divine the essence of the Reagan administration's policies, and the alleged slowness with which the United States has addressed the key issue of strategic arms control. Until the Soviets are more certain about the central elements of US policy toward Moscow, they are likely to continue to pose as the aggrieved party in the superpower relationship, hoping to undercut Western support for US regional and military initiatives, while deferring as long as possible a major commitment of Soviet resources to match the potential US strategic effort. 





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Policy Trends

General Perceptions. The Soviets view their relationship with the United States as fundamentally competitive. This concept, based on ideological antagonisms and geopolitical rivalry, drives Soviet perceptions of US policies. Likewise, it governs their analyses of the US decisionmaking process with respect to the USSR and of the political coloration of successive US administrations, whether Republican or Democrat.

The Soviets already have concluded that the new US administration is imbued with a far stronger anti-Soviet ideology than its predecessor; President Reagan himself has long been for Soviet propaganda a symbolic leader of the "antidetente" political forces in the United States. For Moscow, however, the concern about the Reagan administration is not simply that it represents a more ideologically determined adversary but that its advent to power represents an intensification, if not the culmination, of a secular trend in US policy that is less tolerant of Soviet expansionism and intent on the reassertion of a more vigorous American role as the political and military guarantor of Western security.

Since early in the Carter administration, Soviet analysts were increasingly preoccupied with what they saw as growing divisions within the administration itself and the body politic at large, between those allegedly intent on accentuating the competitive aspects of the relationship—particularly in the military realm—and those who were seen as seeking to preserve the cooperative aspects—primarily SALT—as the core of the US-Soviet relationship. The failure of the Vienna summit to lead to a reversal of what Moscow saw as the more ominous trends in US policy—crystallized by what it regarded as a fabricated confrontation over the Soviet brigade in Cuba—led to an avowed Soviet assessment, also reflected in clandestine reporting, that the "antidetente" forces

had achieved dominance in US policy circles. Thus, the stagnation of SALT II, the evolving US-Chinese rapprochement, US attempts to reinvigorate NATO, Washington's effort to enhance its military and political presence in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere in the Third World, all are seen by Moscow as part of a more profound shift in US policy aimed at countering Soviet influence and power.

Soviet suspicions of the Reagan administration are further informed by an acute sense of Moscow's own vulnerabilities—Poland, Afghanistan, and apparently intractable economic difficulties at home—which Moscow fears will be the focal points of the new administration's effort to affect Soviet international behavior. Such suspicions are reflected in Soviet charges of covert US assistance to the Afghan resistance movement and of alleged US interference in Polish internal affairs. Similarly, public professions of Soviet determination to compete with any US arms buildup, whatever the cost, betray an implicit concern that such a competition would entail substantial economic sacrifice.

The Soviets nevertheless view Washington's ability to implement its putative strategy toward the USSR as questionable, being subject to the dictates of competing domestic economic priorities and to reluctance on the part of US allies to incur the costs of either increased defense expenditures or increased tensions with Moscow. Growing unease within Western Europe over the ambivalent US commitment to arms control and resistance toward the new US restrictive policies on technology transfer are viewed from Moscow as key American liabilities and, conversely, opportunities for Moscow to provoke divisions between the United States and its allies. Moreover, although they are anxious about the potential dimensions of US defense programs, the Soviets recognize that final decisions on such programs will be subject to domestic



pressures, Congressional debate, and, to a considerable extent, will be dependent upon the success of the Reagan administrations's economic policies. A failure by the Reagan administration to follow through on its stated commitment to increase defense spending at a 7-percent annual rate will reinforce the Soviet view that social and economic conditions inhibit the United States from being the vigorous competitor intended by the Reagan administration. 

Defense Policies. The Reagan administration's stated commitment to accelerate the US defense effort is of greatest concern to the Soviets, and the extent to which US programs are actually implemented is probably the most important factor for Moscow in determining its own responses. Thus far, the Soviets apparently have sought to refrain from overt actions or statements that would solidify Western support behind the prospective US defense effort. They have sought instead to undercut the rationale for increased US defense spending by an extensive propaganda campaign centered around Soviet "peace" proposals and the public dissemination of calculations purporting to show that a strategic balance already exists, including nuclear forces in Europe. At the same time, faced with the demise of SALT II, the Soviets appear to be seeking a basis for the resuscitation of the strategic arms dialogue by tacitly observing the SALT II agreement while pushing for TNF negotiations and suggesting both publicly and privately possible agenda items for SALT III—including measures to enhance the survivability of central strategic systems. 

Moscow has used a succession of statements by top Soviet military leaders, including Defense Minister Ustinov, to proclaim that the USSR will match any US military buildup. Although these statements in no way bind Soviet defense policy to a particular direction or level of effort, they are probably meant as a serious statement of Soviet intent to preserve central elements of the strategic military balance in roughly their current proportions. Soviet statements, however, have become increasingly acrimonious, which may, in turn, suggest that Moscow is becoming more anxious about the near-term decisions that it feels constrained

to make to counter US programs. There have been private Soviet assertions that Moscow is adjusting its own defense spending upward in response to prospective US programs. Such an adjustment, however, would be most likely in areas such as research and development that would be difficult for us to confirm. 

Given the relatively constant increments in the Soviets' defense spending over the past decade, their own large array of ongoing research and development programs for strategic nuclear systems, and the fact that many of the US programs under consideration will not be deployed until the mid-to-late 1980s, the Soviets are probably fairly confident of their ability to compete with an accelerated US defense effort over the short term. The Soviets currently have several new or modified land-based ICBM programs—including a mobile system—in an advanced state of preflight development. They have initiated production of a new class of ballistic missile submarine, the Typhoon, which will enhance the survivability of the Soviet sea-based strategic force. In the last two years, the Soviets have begun to modernize their existing antiballistic missile (ABM) system around Moscow by replacing their aboveground ABM launchers with silos that could house their new high-acceleration interceptor. In addition, they have a large, new phased-array radar under construction near Moscow that could have battle management potential. 

Moscow probably views its ability to compete militarily with Washington over the long run, however, as far more problematical. While professing a belief that the United States cannot sustain such a long-run competition, the Soviets probably anticipate that even a partial fulfillment of the Reagan administration's defense plans would create serious problems for Soviet defense planning and, at a minimum, force a reallocation of resources away from badly needed investments in critically deficient sectors of the Soviet economy such as energy, transportation, and consumer goods. Moreover, the Soviets are probably even more concerned about the US potential for some sort of technological breakthrough, as witnessed by Mos-

cow's commentary on "stealth" technology, the resurgence of US interest in ABM defense, and the operational testing of the Space Shuttle. Most recently, in fact, Soviet media have linked Moscow's proposed Treaty on Banning the Deployment of Any Weapons in Outer Space with concerns over the potential military applications of the Shuttle.

Arms Control. Programmatic Soviet responses to US defense programs will also depend upon the evolution of US arms control policy. The Soviets appear to be reconciled to the nonratification of SALT II but, at the same time, they probably view the task of their own arms control strategy as being to preserve as much of the SALT I and SALT II agreements as possible to constrain the potential dimensions and uncertainties of a strategic arms race. Private comments suggest that the Soviets have adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward the Reagan administration's arms control policy while accepting that the resuscitation of a dialogue on strategic arms is a longer term prospect. They probably do not anticipate a resumption of such a dialogue until mid-1982 at the earliest. Moreover, from the statements of administration spokesmen thus far, Moscow may anticipate that the Reagan strategic arms control package will bear a strong resemblance to the Carter administration's "deep cuts" proposals of March 1977, centered around an attempt to effect reductions in the Soviet heavy-missile force and overall throw weight.

Reporting from both diplomatic and clandestine sources suggests that tensions may be building in Moscow between those more sanguine about the eventual prospects for strategic arms control and US-Soviet relations and others more anxious about the ultimate motives of the Reagan administration. A more pessimistic view may be reflected in increasingly strident media denunciations of US defense and arms control policies. Similarly, more deep-seated Soviet concerns are most likely reflected in public charges that proposed revisions in the US strategic force posture, allegedly reflected in PD-59, are designed to facilitate the adoption of a "first strike" nuclear doctrine, and that developments such as the decision

to produce the neutron bomb and intimations of a possible desire to revise the ABM Treaty are representative of a further shift in US thinking toward a "war-fighting" strategy.

In the absence of the SALT dialogue, the Soviets have devoted increasing attention to the theater nuclear force (TNF) issue. In some respects, they view a TNF dialogue as a surrogate for SALT and, at a minimum, intend to seek to encompass so-called US "forward-based systems" within the scope of the TNF discussions. Most recently, Soviet spokesmen have advanced a revised definition of Moscow's proposed TNF data base that excluded systems such as US Poseidon missiles assigned to NATO previously included in Soviet accounting—thereby laying the presumed basis for an independent TNF dialogue unencumbered by SALT-accountable systems. It is likely, however, that the Soviets would resist any US effort in future TNF talks to impose global limits on Soviet theater nuclear systems, thereby encompassing all Soviet SS-20s capable of striking Western Europe. Instead, the Soviets would insist that only Soviet SS-20s and other "medium-range weapons" west of the Urals should be subject to any eventual aggregate TNF restrictions.

East-West Economic Relations. One of the more hopeful aspects of the early Soviet assessment of the Reagan administration was that it would prove to be more forthcoming in facilitating US-Soviet trade. In their earliest analyses, the Soviets both publicly and privately characterized the new US Government as a business administration and, as such, potentially more amenable to the normalization and expansion of trade relations with the Soviet Union.

The Soviets probably viewed the lifting of the grain embargo as a partial reflection of the administration's perceived sensitivity to business interests and perhaps also as a demonstration of its vulnerability to domestic political pressures from which the USSR might be able to profit in the future. The Soviets probably hope that efforts to lobby US businessmen may affect

governmental policy, and they will persist in trying to portray the USSR as desiring more trade and as a reliable trade partner. On the other hand, the Soviets appear to be increasingly pessimistic about the evolution of a more favorable US policy on trade with the USSR. US attempts to impose a more restrictive Western policy on the transfer of advanced technology to the USSR, which the Soviets regarded as a central theme of the Ottawa summit, are seen as evidence of an increasingly negative attitude within the administration toward the expansion of East-West trade and has provoked further Soviet concerns that even if the United States adopts a less intransigent policy, it, nevertheless, will seek to link the expansion of trade with Soviet foreign policy more broadly.

The perceived harsher side of US trade policy is even more disconcerting to Moscow when viewed against the continuing economic and political crisis in Poland. While the Soviets frankly acknowledge that the Polish problem stems, in part, from excessive reliance on Western trade and credits, their analysis goes one step further in asserting that Western financial "circles," with the United States in the lead, have assiduously sought to cultivate such a dependence to effect changes in the socialist political order. Notwithstanding its propaganda purpose, Moscow's denunciation of alleged US machinations in Poland almost certainly masks a sense of Soviet vulnerability to political reform pressures throughout Eastern Europe, stemming from systemic economic disorders, creeping "consumerism," and a politically distressing tendency on the part of East European regimes to look Westward for trade and investment.

Regional Policies

The Soviets probably have viewed their ability to play an increasingly assertive global role since the early 1970s as, in part, a function of both their growing military capabilities and of a reluctance on the part of Washington to become engaged in another Vietnam-type commitment. In recent years, the Soviets have also seen the domestically generated restraints on US policy as waning, if not evaporating, and now view the United States as a resurgent global competitor unde-

an administration willing to commit greater US military and economic resources to defend US regional interests.

The early actions of the Reagan administration in El Salvador appear to have given the Soviets pause in seeking to exploit regional instabilities in an area where the United States enjoys significantly greater strategic advantages. The subsequent US decision to increase its military assistance to Pakistan and the recent US naval exercise challenging Libyan territorial claims to the Gulf of Sidra are probably assessed as indications of a growing US willingness to use its military power to support its regional interests. Once again, however, Moscow will be looking for evidence of longer term US resolve in implementing such a policy, such as continued commitment of resources to the Rapid Deployment Force, fulfillment of announced plans to expand the size of the US Navy, and other improvements in US general purpose forces. In the meantime, the Soviets are likely to refrain from actions that might unnecessarily exacerbate regional tensions with Washington, while simultaneously demonstrating Moscow's intent to sustain existing commitments in areas central to Soviet policy.

Western Europe. Western Europe is viewed by Moscow as perhaps the axis of US-Soviet regional interaction during the Reagan administration and an area where Moscow apparently sees substantial opportunities to erode the solidarity of Western policies toward the USSR.

European reluctance to jeopardize trade and political ties with the East, in spite of Moscow's invasion of Afghanistan or growing concern about Soviet military power opposite Western Europe, is interpreted by Moscow as a sign of widening divergencies between Washington and its NATO allies. Moreover, the Reagan administration's initial moves on El Salvador, the Middle East, and arms control, as well as the international impact of the administration's economic programs, are probably seen by the Soviets as additional irritants in the US-West European relation-

ship. On the other hand, the Soviets appear to have been surprised by the degree of Western consensus on TNF as demonstrated by the vituperative Soviet response to NATO's May 1981 Ministerial Session—suggesting that Moscow is inclined, at times, to overestimate the significance of intra-Western differences.

The proposed gas pipeline to Western Europe—even though it will only marginally increase Western dependence upon Soviet energy supplies—is probably viewed by Moscow as an opportunity to exacerbate US–West European frictions by accentuating their differing stakes in a lessening of tensions with the USSR. The Soviets appear confident of their ability to sustain the West European commitment to the pipeline deal, in spite of US admonitions, and likewise see little West European support for a Western policy that would link trade relations to progress on arms control or other East-West issues.

NATO's planned deployment of modernized TNF is the most important issue for the future of Soviet policy toward Western Europe. While threatening counterdeployments of its own, Moscow's effort to block NATO's plans has been waged primarily in the diplomatic and propaganda realms. In addition, the Soviets have conducted an extensive covert-action campaign aimed at manipulating public opinion in those countries—such as the Netherlands and Belgium—which are seen as most vulnerable to domestic pressures to break ranks with NATO's decision. As part of the Soviets' recent effort to convince West European publics as well as key political figures that a theater nuclear force balance already exists in Europe, Moscow has advanced selective data, allegedly drawn from a Soviet military staff study, to support its balance claims and to discredit US estimates.

In their effort to discredit US policies, the Soviets are encouraged by what they see as growing antinuclear and neutralist sentiments throughout Western Europe. They also see US actions, such as the decision to produce the neutron bomb and doctrinal pronouncements on limited nuclear targeting options, as further opportunities to inflame suspicions in some segments

of West European publics that the United States is seeking to limit any nuclear conflict to Europe, and, in effect, emboldening Washington to pursue more confrontational policies toward Moscow in other regions of the world.

Moscow's massive anti-NATO campaign reflects both concern about the military consequences of NATO's planned deployments and a recognition that the implementation of NATO's decision would be a convincing reaffirmation of US political and military leadership within the Atlantic Alliance. Moscow's immediate hope appears to be that the resumption of TNF talks, by their very existence, will result in waning West European support for actual deployments of new NATO systems. The Soviets, however, have yet to offer the type of concessions—specifically an offer to reduce their SS-20 force—that would convince the West Europeans of the genuineness of Moscow's arms control overtures. Such a move seems unlikely in light of past Soviet practice. Instead, Moscow is likely to try to finesse the SS-20 issue by offering to include the SS-20 under the proposed Soviet moratorium on further deployments of theater nuclear systems, while insisting that actual reductions in the SS-20 force would be possible only if NATO reduces its own currently deployed TNF/FBS systems.

The Middle East. In the Middle East, the Soviets see the United States as continuing to seek a more direct military security role through support for regional security arrangements designed to buttress regimes vulnerable to Soviet pressure and the acquisition of bases for the deployment of additional US military forces. In many respects, Moscow sees these moves as a continuation of a trend that began during the Carter administration. The Soviets see the Reagan administration as going further, however, by attempting to convince local regimes to define regional problems in East-West rather than Arab-Israeli terms.

Moscow probably assesses the attempt to highlight the East-West dimension of the Middle East problem as unlikely to make much headway, particularly in

light of intensified Israeli military actions against Iraq, Syria, and Palestinian positions in Lebanon. The Soviets see continued opportunities to exploit Arab frustration with Israeli and US policies and have sought, in particular, to improve relations with Jordan and Kuwait. Although Washington's ability to serve as the sole credible mediator between the Israelis and the Arabs is seen as a reflection of Washington's latent diplomatic strength in the region, US policy is probably seen by Moscow as ultimately dependent upon Washington's ability to resuscitate and to expand the Camp David peace process—a highly problematic contingency from the Soviet perspective.

Faced with a prospective increase in the US military presence in the Middle East, the Soviets have sought to demonstrate that Moscow is able to protect its regional clients, as reflected in Moscow's decision to participate in joint military exercises with Syria in July. The Soviets also are likely to seize upon future Israeli military actions as well as the recent US-Libyan air clash as opportunities to intensify anti-US sentiments among the Arab states, and to press the Soviet case that an enhanced US military presence in the Middle East will lead to a greater possibility of regional conflict.

Southwest Asia. Throughout Southwest Asia the Soviets will attempt to impede US efforts to offset the geostrategic imbalances caused by the collapse of the pro-Western regime in Iran and by the Soviet military thrust into Afghanistan. Pakistan, in particular, is seen as a focal point of US policy. During the latter part of the Carter administration, the Soviets sought to intimidate Pakistan both verbally and by condoning, if not provoking, a number of attacks by Afghan helicopters on Pakistani border outposts. Further incidents might be used to test US resolve in the region and as a way of sending a message to other Asians that US and Chinese friendship is not a reliable protection.

Initial Soviet suspicions that the Reagan administration might move to improve relations with Iraq probably have been allayed somewhat in the aftermath of the Israeli attack on the Baghdad nuclear facility.

Iran, however, remains a major uncertainty for Soviet policymakers, and a focus of Soviet concern that the US might covertly seek to reestablish a pro-Western regime there by supporting exile groups. To improve its own relations with Iran, Moscow concluded an arms deal, in June, for the sale of Soviet air defense equipment to Tehran, worth an estimated \$100 million.

East Asia. The possible sale of weapons or weapons-related technology to China is at the center of Soviet concerns about the Reagan administration's East Asian policy. Such concerns also predate the Reagan administration although the Soviets view with great alarm what they see as the Reagan administration's move toward a more formalized military relationship with China.

The Soviets continue to see persistent tensions and inherent limits in the US-Chinese relationship, stemming not only from the Taiwan issue but also from potential Chinese attempts to embroil the United States in a conflict with the USSR. Thus, the Soviet response to the continuing US-Chinese rapprochement has been to condemn publicly its potential military dimensions and to highlight latent frictions between Washington and Beijing, while continuing to augment Soviet military forces in the Far East as a hedge against an uncertain future.

Soviet apprehensions with respect to US intentions in the Far East are also based on a belief that the Reagan administration will seek to encourage Japan to play a more active military role in East Asia, as part of a US attempt to create a Sino-US-Japanese axis aimed at limiting Moscow's ability to exploit its own military power as a lever of influence in the region. Here again, however, the Soviets see significant countervailing trends, stemming from anti-nuclear and pacifist sentiments within the Japanese body politic, which Moscow has sought to channel, via an intense propaganda effort, in an anti-American direction. Soviet attempts to engage both Japan and China in a dialogue on so-called military confidence building measures, first announced by President

Brezhnev in February, are a further reflection of Moscow's effort to undermine the basis for an expanded US security role in East Asia. []

Latin America. The Reagan administration's heightened commitment to stability in El Salvador apparently provoked a Soviet reassessment of the prospects for Soviet- and Cuban-sponsored revolutionary upheavals throughout Central America. Clandestine reporting during the latter half of 1980 indicates that Moscow was encouraged by the success of the Sandanista-led revolution in Nicaragua and by the prospects for further Marxist gains in El Salvador. Clandestine reporting further indicates that before the so-called final offensive by the Salvadoran insurgents in January 1981, the Soviets facilitated the flow of arms to the leftist guerrillas in El Salvador. []

The failure of the "final offensive," coincident with statements by the new US administration that suggested to Moscow that Washington was willing to risk a confrontation with Cuba and the USSR over El Salvador, led to a revision of Moscow's earlier revolutionary optimism and heightened concerns about US intentions toward Cuba. As a consequence, the new priorities of Soviet policy became to reinforce Cuban military defenses and to try to consolidate the gains of the "progressive" regime in Nicaragua through military aid and political support. Throughout the first half of 1981, Soviet arms aid to Cuba increased dramatically, although Moscow has been publicly equivocal on the degree of its commitment to defend Cuba in the event of US intervention. Elsewhere in Central America, the Soviets reportedly have lessened their direct contacts with leftist insurgent groups, apparently hoping that the political situation in El Salvador and elsewhere will continue to polarize between left and right as the result of both economic conditions and popular reaction to US involvement in the region. []

Africa. In Africa the Soviets are seeking to convince black nationalist regimes that the Reagan administration is moving toward closer ties with South Africa

and attempting to impose a settlement in Namibia that would preserve South African economic domination and perpetuate white minority rule. Moscow's rhetoric, however, is once again underlain by a more serious concern that the United States intends to play a more active role in the region, possibly including support for antiregime insurgents in Angola. The Soviets may also fear that an escalating competition between US- and Soviet-backed local actors might lead to direct US military pressures on the Cuban military umbilical to Africa. To forestall such a progression of events, the Soviets have engaged in an extensive diplomatic campaign, with particular emphasis on Nigeria and the Frontline States, seeking to build a regional consensus against US policies and potential Western intervention. In addition, the Soviets continue to supply arms to Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zambia, as well as SWAPO (South-West Africa People's Organization) and the ANC (African National Congress). []

In the Horn the Soviets are similarly trying to provoke regional animosities against Washington in an effort to impede Washington's attempts to enhance the US military presence in the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. Moscow continues to support Ethiopian-based Somali insurgents while deepening the Soviet commitment to the Marxist regimes in Addis Ababa and South Yemen. The Soviets may also seek to build upon their existing military presence in these states as a counter to prospective US military deployments in the region. []

Moscow also continues its extensive military aid and support for Libyan activities in Africa. Before the recent US-Libyan air clash, the Soviets appeared to be stepping up their military presence in Libya, including the first visit by Soviet naval combatants since Qadhafi took power and the first deployment of Soviet reconnaissance aircraft to Libya. The US-Libyan clash in the Gulf of Sidra, however, complicates Soviet involvement in Libya. Qadhafi's reputation for unpredictability and irrational violence is a

[redacted]

subject of concern to Moscow also, and it is extremely unlikely that the Soviets would allow themselves to be drawn into a military conflict with Washington as the result of Libyan actions. [redacted]

Conclusion

Soviet responses to the Reagan administration's initial policy postures have sought to tread a careful path between not provoking what Moscow sees as an aroused United States, while countering what Moscow also sees as US attempts to exploit Soviet vulnerabilities near home and the overextension of Soviet resources in various regions of the globe. Privately, the Soviets continue to express frustration at their inability to divine the essence of the Reagan administration's policies, and the alleged slowness with which the United States has addressed the central issue of strategic arms control. Until the Soviets become more certain about the central elements of US policy toward Moscow, they are likely to continue to pose as the aggrieved party in the superpower relationship, hoping to undercut Western support for US regional and military initiatives while deferring, as long as possible, a major commitment of Soviet resources to match the potential US strategic effort. [redacted]

